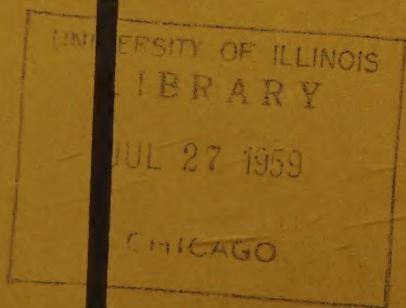


THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL



SUMMER
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THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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NEW ENGLAND SUITE

I

*I hear in my brain all New England echoing down
and around me,
And in the colony of my heart away. My land is a
factory now,
Or a suburb, a parking-lot, liquid in sun on the level
tar.
Below local histories, markers and chartered ground,
beneath brick,
Bright cemented disclaimers, lie crushed and still
Indian-
Haunted rock, lie the bones of hard people often un-
comely and cold,
Lie swatches of hair, and commodes, lie mirrors and
lobster-pots, letters
In palimpsest, arrowheads, fish-knives, and ropes
now all mummied in tar;
Good familial books and chipped jugs, penwipers,
samplers and useful shells;
Whalebones and beads, genealogy, sweetgrass and
old uphill passions;
Birchbark and dimity, cracked leather straps and
shrunk iron, denials;
And spyglasses empty of eye, the salted-green brass-
bound recallers
Of the masted-in-intricate-pride, of the widowing
seas, and the land
Sea defines: the tides of the mind leave this rack on
memory's shore.*

II

The regional bird is the gull, protected by law, protecting

And proctoring, fouling and scavenging all our most visited shores:

Able, unlovely, raucous, persistent, at home in the storm;

Friendless, eternal, yellow of eye and whitely aware;
Undiscouraged if dun, a clown to the camera, famishers' food.

The southering bird on whose feather has fallen the rumor of snow,

The flier afflicted with instinct and warned by the touch and the go

Of a soft geometric—that sniff and that sift in the needling air—

He leaves. All the birds know by the cold, and believe in the sun,

Slant as he may.

(And you watch. When last did a bird of this world

Seize a child from your bloody town, mar a woman, accuse or unmake

Any man?)

To the birds who ensky many myths they would scorn—

Who high-bracket New England—New England is only a flat like a map

With the waters precise in the infinite inlets, a visible ground

Laid out for their feeding; is neither to nest on nor haply to fall.

For themselves, the seen birds, whether migrants or natives, have never

Been known to give names to the curious people, to count

All the tourists or label the ankles of strangers like
herons who stalk
The emptying estuaries, quiet, with glass to the
questing eye.

III

Musselled, sea-lavendered shores throwing beaches,
low dikes
To put sand between salt of the wave and the salt of
the meadowing marshes
Where silt waves have grained into grasses of silver
and green, are unpeopled
Like the beaches that run under gull-foot, below ea-
gled cliffs and the headlands
Inspected by whales, and the uplands patrolled by
the bear overhill
And the horsy, high-shouldered moose with the ant-
lers of ossified kelp.
From the mountain to shore, through hills, rises,
valleys and rivers, odd ponds,
In their pockets, the bent stands of scrub and the
hungry foundations, all acres,
The regional beast is no proudfoot, deep in his chest,
nor a brightmane,
No flasher of eyes, nor bayonet-brandisher frightful
of man;
The regional beast is a trinity noxious to dogs, know-
ing men:
The muskrat, the skunk and the woodchuck, all drab
in defiance, all near.

IV

The regional fish is the mackerel, or else the low pas-
toral cod

In the market; but over the eyelid's horizon goes
 swimming away,
Like a barrel of anguish, the great whale trailing his
 stintless blood
In a moonpath of red across the Pacific savannas, and
 huge
Green valleys down, below the white sails and crisp
 oars,
The sharp intentions, going under and down. Both
 whaler and whale,
Pursuit and profit, loss and return of the voyagers,
 now
Read as history's blow; and the strike and the flurry,
 the sounding,
The flensing, the reek of the try-out recede to a
 region
Of rowboats for rent and of dories agap and awash
 with petunias,
Of seafood at roadside, clean restrooms and gas. The
 regional fish
Is the clamcake announced in electrical script; the
 seasonal fish
Is the sucker.

And all New England echoes down and away.

V

Violet, daisy, sweet-william and black-eyed susan,
 sea-rose,
Queen-anne's-lace, the goldenrod, sumac and orient
 hydrangia
Unbelieved, but brought home by new-bearded son
 with new judgment in eyes—
Like lilac, no bride was declared in the cargo; colum-
 bine, laurel

And honeysuckle, trumpet-vine, buttercup—all these
 combine
To make the regional flower, with fireweed and In-
 dian-pipe, paintbrush
Of devils, the gentian, the jewelweed, milkweed, the
 poison-bright ivy:
These, and more, are given to see, the good herbs are
 left to discover.
The flowers were pressed between leaves of the books
 —the few books and good—
And the books were impressed on the brains; on a
 continent brains were then sown.

VI

Whole graveyards on hillsides are stone-fledged with
 beards, and upended
To heaven and frozen of chin to the flint of the soil;
 whole hillsides
Are graveyards unhallowed, perimeters nubile with
 birches like hopes
Of young serious virgins, all clean and surrounded
 by sentinel cedars:
Dark daggers at wrong, evergreen like original sin.
 Planted here
In this undulant underground churchyard, are the
 hopes of New England,
Unique in their angles and white in their morals,
 unique in their bite
On the sky; these fears are redeemed by their force,
 which made and still makes
But metaphor of winter weather. The wind frays the
 flags and shrivels
The wreaths that sag onto urns eroded, under stiff
 wings

In the moving air over earth of such confined rectitude,
Cold regard of recording stones, generations of marbled woe.

VII

Our tree is ubiquitous pine—possibly spruce or the tamarack,
Maple whose blood bespeaks sugar in veins—but the bark is of birch,
And the leaf is the loyal hard brown old man's hand of the oak.
Sweet groundpine or juniper, wild grape or bayberry, brambles—all run
Like the nerves of this ground whose berries taste tart as an apothegm.
But the tree that the colonists planted as badge of their towns was another—
And this is their reason—: the reach and the slendering height of the straight,
Academic, imperious elm, like the aim of New England in art,
Lurks in the crook of the root gripping soil, in its thirst among rocks.

VIII

The regional colors are wilder by contrast and subtler than Mexico.
The urge of the autumn, the accent of frost, makes the primary chords:
The scarlets and oranges, yellows and purples, the high exclamations
In leaf, and the firmer, full statements in fruit.
Brown earth and pale sand,

And impossible snow make the canvas. The sky and
the sea do the rest:
All the blue, gray and silver, all greens not alive that
can change;
All the changes among them, and sunsets in season,
all weathering motions.
The regional hues that are minor are man's: the
glosses of lanterns
And tar, the dulled ictus of rust and the glint of the
hair-thin ring,
Wedding-gold. The regional colors dream under neon,
and wait.

IX

The life of New England in centuries gone is a guess,
or proverbial guff.
Lust could wear homespun and wonder on calico, sun
sweeten sweat
On the skin, or skin get the alternate ache of dry
salt from the sea;
Love could walk barefoot and brown with the dust
of the sun, or go booted,
And berried in cheek and bright lip by the hollying
frost. The life
Of the regional youth was no glimpse between head-
stones of wives early gone
From the childbed and footstones of children still-
born or but shown for a season
Or two; the life of the youth of this country was not
just a summer
Following thaw, before blizzard, a sun between snows.
The youth
Of this region was everything strong, little easy: if
hard, yet it shone.

—Cleaning and bleaching, mending and patching,
 painting with paint,
 Oil or varnish, with whitewash or tar; the quilting
 and candling preserving
 And saving, here making and there making do—but
 they made!

To mend

Is a form of *to make*, and to paint is a shaping, an
 outward approval;
 Doing without is an aspect of using: the use of each
 thing is to wear
 It utterly out as loving old couples have done of their
 bodies,
 And yet live and apparently love; as thinkers have
 whittled their brains
 Into words, and still see things and laugh; as the
 poets I know
 From this region can go to the antarctic ice-cap, alone
 with a pen,
 And there make New England of nothing, or scrim-
 shaw whole Indies of ice.

X

*These states are my mind, and my blood with their
 history flows all down
 And away, bleeding west in an empire and south in
 a passion; these states
 Are the map of my intricate heart, and no orderly
 page and no print
 Can reduce them to handbook. The mind flows away
 to beginnings in water,
 Past sand, over rocks and rock-pools, to the rising of
 hills through the pines
 And the pine-heavy air of all lands, and across the
 whole cloud of the sky.*

*Yet my mind is this country of slower than tropical,
longer, more passionate
Growth, and this ocean contains my imaginings;
mountains suggest
My haphazard projects; astonishing snows are my
silences, gales
My level declaring of Autumn. In August untended
wild roses
That overwhelm silvering shingles of cedar amount
to my tenderness.
Quite like a monument, steeped and peeling of paint,
worth preserving
By the civic of mind, I am nothing alone without gift
of this ground
To grow in and give in the double-bed dark to my
boys in the sacrament
Love before driving the seed of my being, long warm
with a wife
And all green with a poem, under the quilt of this
eldering earth.*

Charles Philbrick

IN MEMORY

Purple shadows gather towards the night.
A light no man can see glows inwardly.
And I, a stranger in a rented attic
Chamber, lie upon my shrouded bed,
In the twilight of the week, remembering

How it was angels and heaven then. The sun
Ran wet and golden through the curtains,
Splashing a child, as all alone he sat
Among the rushing motes and danced his dreams
In the holy hush of noon, in the hot and liquid
Silence of the Sabbath sun. Beside
Him on the flowered plate, some silken fruit
An old and roughened hand had polished, a slice
Of doughy cake, raisin rich and veined
With cinnamon, dispensed with care, and measured
Sparingly into the eager hands
Of the expectant grandchild. Later still,
The steaming cup and icy chip of sugar,
Melting, tongue-tipped, in the amber sip
Of tea. But first from sainted pillows rose
The breath of sacred sleep; lovely and low
It rose and fell, scattering praise and whispering
God's almighty word that it was good.
Above him on the wall, in faded navy
Tunic, Little Boy Blue slept on forever,
One arm across his face, a knee drawn up,
And horn forgotten in the olive meadow.
While bright behind their dull and dirtied windows,
A swarm of rainbow fish flashed through the water,
Twinkled gold and red among the leaf-fringed
Coils of grass, or lingered, quivering,
Above the sunburnt sand and stretching snails.
And on his port of glass a fierce and frenzied
Fly started, raced his prop, and flew . . .
As fled in unremitting time forever
Gone, the holy hush, the burning god,
The sleepers' hymn, and I, the child among
The dancing motes, floating his dreams in the hot
And honeyed river of the wine-blessed day.

Samuel A. Weiss

THREE POEMS

Heron in Swamp

Had I not caught him by a swerve of eye
In movement as his natural element,
Air plastered to his wings, thin falls of sun
Cascading down his breast, legs locked in flight,
I should have thought him reed, so pure he stands
Frozen in silence; bird into vegetable
Transforms hard fact to fluid miracle;
So thinks himself a reed that reed becomes.
If there's such sanctuary in belief
I'll trust the verdict of the hoodwinked eye—
Know, if I clap my hand,
One reed will stay, though all the swamp fly off.
Frances Minturn Howard

The True and Happy Fable of Beauty and the Beast

Her sisters asked for gowns and gems
To glitter on their ugliness,
Like stunted trees so bright with birds
Their true proportions none might guess.

But Beauty asked the hardest thing—
She wanted one white rose, to be
The starkly crystallized, thorned and pearled
Symbol of her virginity.

Fine gowns and gems were quickly bought—

But Beauty's rose—its cost was high—
Her father's life, unless she came
To charm a Beast, or see him die.

So Beauty watched the castle doors
Swing wide, without a touch of hand,
As if an unseen lover stood
Athirst, aflame, for her command.

Yet there was no one but her host,
That gentle Beast, who nightly pled
For Beauty's heart; she dined with him
But still, reluctant, shook her head,

For lying in her satin sheets
In dreams, alone, in her gold bed
By a young prince with amorous eyes
Beauty was nightly visited.

So Beauty and the Beast both pined
For ideal unattainable;
It is small wonder that she found
Her splendors insupportable,

And begged the generous Beast for leave
To visit home; her envious
Sisters then kept her there by means
Sisterly, subtle, devious,

Until in dreams she saw her Beast
Reproach her, dying, from the ground
With broken promise; then her heart
Burst wide with knowledge like a wound,

And hastening to her Beast she kissed
His lips, and saw him change to Prince;
As beasts for other girls have changed
Besides sweet Beauty, ever since.

Frances Minturn Howard

The Sleeping Beauty

Was it because the prince delayed too long?
The thicket lengthened, blocking off the view,
And other girls lay beautiful in sleep
With no hedge to get through.

Still she lay tranced, love tracing on her face
Some subtle pattern of foreknown desire;
Some ardent inkling, some receptive grace
Deployed about her lips like the shadow of fire.

The white transparence of her temples rose
Twin cliffs against the green's encroaching host,
Like some abandoned city, half in time,
Invested with the beauty of the lost.

Would no man buck the formidable fence
Sequestering what lay, remote and pure,
For the brave hand? The thorns would vanish then—
But could a lad be sure?

At last the thicket itself began to hover
In restless movement above her silken things—
The heavy petals trembled around her head
In small sweet sighs.

Until the bramble's lithe and living weight
Lay on her utterly, from foot to head—
The slow, sweet driving of the thorns possessed
Her maidenhead.

Then she was rose, all rose; off she went wandering
Through the blue evening air, green foot by foot, and
gave
Her tumble of flowers to every wayside fence
For the commonest passing lad to take and have.

Frances Minturn Howard

IN THE CENOZOIC SPAN OF SLEEP

graymalkin creeping
 stalking sparrow
 lift one paw
and freeze
 freeze there
 stalking creeping
graymalkin stop and tell me
why
 you copy panthers
 cougars
followed as you are
 by unweaned kittens leaping
loose your hynotizing eye
 let the sparrow
 fly away
 graymalkin stop
 and tell me
why
 my tendons tense me
 as I stand and watch you
 stalking
did our genes
once link a creature
do I stalk and creep myself
 deeper somehow
in the cenozoic span of sleep
 graymalkin

Dean Chase

A CHAPLAIN RETURNS TO THE ISLES

The ten-year wound persists in limp and scar.
My leg, slew-footed in Pacific sand,
shows stitched and graying tissue near the knee.

A shattered rifle rusts between wet rocks,
abandoned for a decade to the swill
of hurricanes and spreading verdigris . . .
What hands once gripped and aimed it at the caves—
the rifler's eye crow-footed at the sight—
while corsairs dove into the rising flak
and beached battalions slithered into holes?

The ocean, geysered by the lighting shells,
clogged slowly with the bodies left adrift
or bobbing in the ruck of piers, debris
and all the jetsam of direct assault
by waves of soldiers on defended shores.

One boy I calmed by lying on his legs
until his panic from the mortars passed.
Later on the beach I cut his jangled tags . . .
His squirming legs still stir me in the night,
and fever-wild I dream him to the ground
and shield him always from the enfilade . . .

This afternoon I found the ten-year cross
and stencilled name I once saw punched in discs
of tin and threaded on the plastic cord
I cut from what lay underneath a piece
of tenting on a pier where corpsmen broke
the sulfa packs with frantic hands and swore.

Only the shattered rifle wedged in rock
tokens the night that kept me supplicant
and crouched behind the prone or squatting men—
the wounded, calling from a somewhere trench—

the shot that sprawled me backward in the sand.

Balding, I loiter now where waves subside
and spill into the level, green lagoon.

Beyond the reef, Chamorrans dive for crabs
or laugh in pairs and dredge the shore for clams.
I watch them dump and rinse the weedy nets,
pointing at the catch like children pleased in play . . .

My children, fill me with your children's joy
and proffer me your hands as I give mine.
You do not know the midnights I have seen
this island burning and these tides convulsed.
I am one who smokes and walks to stay awake.
My children, hold me in your children's joy.
I bring you medals, beads and holy cards.
My children—friends—why run away from me?

Samuel Hazo

from ORIGIN OF A DESIGN

IX O ghost all made of dazzle,
feel my flesh please, its asperities,
then start your healing grace.
Bless the hung seed in the bread,
breathe your weird sparkle-shine
on the wine, try your whole game
of blessing-blame, fill my tomb
with a life that is cleanstained,
shrive, melting across skies,
your once glorious game,
pearl patina the city. All right.
But first please touch my flesh.

Neil Weiss

THE TRANSFIXION

The nun lay in the chancel, robed in white.
She had died young, her face yet dazzling in
Its coif. Between her breasts Christ lies transfixed
In red and white. The two young girls outside
The chapel whisper in the dark "No one
Has seen us come. Get me the cross, and I
Will have the Mother Superior change my room."
"Is there nothing you'll let me do instead?
I'm afraid the Lord will punish me with hate.
She's still His bride, before His altar dead."
"Don't be a fool! You know God won't destroy
You here or now. If it's the sin you fear,
Think of the sin gone by and the sin to come.
What is theft to that? What's theft to all
The sins that you'll commit and yet repent
Before you die? Besides, Theresa's dead—
Sister Theresa is dead. It's not the same."

The words between them stopped. The taller girl
Went through the chapel door but kept her gaze
Upon the ground. She hung well back in what
Brief shadows the Candlemas tapers and vigil lights
Allowed and reached the corpse with eyes averted
Still, but stumbled as her foot came down
Upon the corner of the bier. Her hand,
Thrown forth to keep her from a fall, was rough
Upon the cross. The breast she touched was soft
Which she had thought would be hard as stone:
Her eyes fled to the face she knew alive
But dreaded to know dead. Christ how serene!
A burning shaft struck fiercely to her heart
From high above the altar, where she turned.
Those eyes were lidded too; the side was pierced,
And blood ran from the wound, the nails, the thorns.

Her fingers closed about the cross—withdrawed
From the dead. The fragile golden linkage snapped.
Possessed, the girl ran up the center aisle
And flung the cross to the other at the door,
Then moved unknowing to her room and bed.

In the night she spent her dream and lived an old
One through. Upon a sudden thought she moaned
And writhed, arose, and went to the other's room:
"Give it back to me, give it back. I have to put
It on her breast again. I didn't think
Of her." The other came awake, first stared,
Then smiled denial. "Give it to me. She needs
Her cross. It will help her into Heaven. She's damned
Without the cross. She used to speak of Hell:
Burning in other torment, other fire.
The cross will save her. Give it back to me."
The other lay back, stretched out her legs, and closed
Her eyes. Her thin white gown was like a veil.
The tall girl cried aloud and swayed and fell.

Harry Morris

GREEK ALMOND

Leaning against the winter
The almond tree flares
Suddenly white, bright
In the February weather,
A blur in the blear garden
Where barren trees
Twist in silent agonies
And vines
Like veins of monsters
Splay against the walls.

Slender, slanting across the wind
The almond tree flares
Like an eager girl
In a swirl of blossoms
White and faintly red,
Clouds banked behind her head,
The sea in a gray hush—
And Winter appalled,
Enthralled to find at his side
A brief, erratic bride.

to right unwinding
fro, fro and to

Myristica
and the vine-veined air
 enlightened by a flute
cockateel-flash
 over fern
ash of rose-pearl
 aralia,
 dulcamara . . .

And the chain coiled
unmassed
coiled on the tree
the dark gold choiring
choiring

When he wound to the right,
collection of arms
menaced the provinces;
unwound, new penances passed,
 but light,
 light;
to left, rapid and regal music,
levies . . .

and two white monkeys
all suggestion
in the guarded wood.

Beyond, beyond,
all snow and fields of snow.

John Berry

Iliados

I

"There was this Helen, and —"

to herward we set course in the wooden ships.

Deep-soiled countries, Lake and Mere terrain,
sending forth young men to do battle

For the daughter-in-law of God. Ships
drawn like a bow up over the breakers,

Bulwark of the shore. Siege to the fortress
on the edge of the sea where the foreign duke

Lay with her, the land drawn about him,
watchmen on all the straits. Bronze shining

On the plain, voices of young men far from
their native land, singing a rapid song.

II

Nightly centaurs came down for a fight.
Omens there of coming and going, by day.

The big eyes of the convalescent moon
peer from the covers at the nematode,

Fungus, nelumbo, and the wild shining
sorcerer migrained in the world's mist.

Under the slain, under the crude, under
the subtle dead, lies ritual earth.

Men standing like young elms, gigantic
and violent, questioning dawn, gaze inland

Over the familiar battle-roads.
These wrinkles are from waiting, not from war . . .

Awaiting the friend who comes bearing resolve,
that lance, for the long journey of a friendship,

The world is silent as if it were alone.
In the night all things delegate

To the cry of a woman their cries.
He comes. The sun delivers us from thought.

III

Narrowtown laid waste, her capital goods
weighing the gunnels of a whole Realm,

Her specie and jewels, scrolls and images,
and best, her persons with their wills torn out . . .
. . . caught the west wind at ebb, and sailed.

Ship lies like a trout
in the quivering sea;
passages of mass
under-upon this
long thing, this
sliver, this
dear ship

Constant fish!
She swims, she swims!
Cling to the finnies of your wriggling
ship!

This is not water, this is destiny.

Sundown, and: colloquy between
the Sun and Things.

If thou hast a mind, stay below,
at such an hour, ere night grab thy bow.

John Berry

Two Songs

I

The first rain
from the sky declines;
all the clustered blenched nuns
of the blackness
make declaration
of dependence;

waterhoard in sedition
among the branches.

When the wind has crazed
our hair
thoughts devour the limbs
in the hour
of the second rain.

Men have been known
to die of silence
between two
songs.

II

The clouds divide
metamorphose
banks of eyes
diaphanous
they mark well
the unreturnable
Way.

Silence of
the uninhabited world
when the ear
is no longer virginal!

Sun embedded in
the naked Now,
navel of our system, is
inconceivably
ignorant.

Hail, pellets of sunlight
in the painted air!

*(It is well to know where
the navel is located.)*

John Berry

Concerning the Finch

Praise be to him
 who sends as messengers
surprising to the branch
 such tophet raised
 such apron speckled
and the wings yellow
 and there was
red and white
 peaceable war-paint
around the grey plumage.

And when he saw
that I had understood
he went
back.

John Berry

Landscape with Figures

Two herons
white
in a blue field.
One stalks about,
one sits
on the ground.

My mother
believes that
the one who
is still
has an internal
wound.

John Berry

Journey to the Way to Kapilavastu

I

When a prince mistrusts his gift,
what is there left?

A journey
through the modalities of
the trance—
reason, passion and the faculties—
to the Khan—
not a fond presumption of palaces,
but as it were,
the referent of thrones.

Behind you is the trip
you may not take again
(for roads are moved
when you have passed)
to kiss the Stranger
you would not accost.
You have no time to know
or not to know these things.
Pass on!

II

Beyond the far district
are the mountains of ice,
Shires of the clouded leopard, the musk deer
and the moose deer . . . Perilous descent . . .
(Yet they came, and the scrolls undatable.)
There is a monster of wisdom in the ice,
But you are too young, and in haste
... by night westward through the bleak passes.
Snow land there, bitter and bright air,
Thinning and thinning ("Crazy! 'S' out of 's head—
should of gone south — south!")

Towering domes of ice and steeples of ice
in a tangle of sky-storms. ("Heart's —")

III

Lumpy aether tumbled about us, formings
of greynesses, earth but assumed below,
And bones of hackled eons in the ice.
Through the stiff air, over the buckled ground,
Up icily came we then to Nalanda . . .

While we sought breath among these warring
shapes,
our souls visible at every breath,
The Golden Eye scorned over us, moved down . . .

Nymphaea nelumbo on the black water,
asleep—

Thou shalt walk on lotos pads,
over this pool,
Like the bronze-winged jacana.

Lata,
sinuata . . .
yielding of green jungle
that closeth after
the bodies of men.

Palustris,

asper . . .

Thus far we came,
relics.
The others we honored.
And
there are rumors
that the Khan
is dissatisfied
with all of us.

John Berry

Persai

I

We fought well;
fear made resolute by desecrations
and the impure pomp of the stranger.

On the rocks, with little speech,
we combed our glittering hair,
gold or xanthous, gravely;

seated there with our bodies, bode attack,
loitered for omens. Battle begun,
glory mounted the day;

and the vine of the soul mounting also
over the barrows of the morningland.
We garlanded the ground, we two.

II

The sky shimmers with languor of silver bells
laid waste. Troublesome night grows near.

What shall be the deed of the dream-speaker
for the people at such an hour?—

Man of accomplishment
easily crazed by sights;
bird-winged neighbor of the gods;
flying at the clash of bonds:

Pardon our guilty grins.
Make lasting songs for us
but remain with the very old,
the very young, and the virgins,
behind the walls;
for war disfurnishes the imagination.

Having heard, go, and let our deaths
attractively appear in the Event.

III

Song, woven in the web of gratitude,
in the web of remonstrance, in the web

Of a thousand reconciliations
in war! Sword of the new iron

Of Victory like the sickle of the moon
at morning when She walks on the shore.

And the nobility of the men surpassing
the wing-tips of the white sea-faring gulls.

O stone more clear than the blond eye of dawn!
And the Prince's thought, holding court

In the light-time, enters the commerce of
soul's perilous terrain, night's bluntest edge.

Win or lose, the Victory is yours,

Prince: you are the opening of doors!

John Berry

Prisoner

August,
a fateful month
in the calendar
of war,
carries on its tunic
the death
of proud ships.

Over the grave arbors
where I labored,
body stained black
from the juice of the sun,
I saw riding

the sun-glittering warcraft,
 gold-amorous wing
swiftling amid clouds,
 arching below
the lazulite.

 Gods,
may they find service;
may the dignity
 of their limbs
be found sweet
 in posterity.

I see notable visions
 for the world
knots round me here.

Dancing, force, elections.
 A flare-eyed man
carrying a babe, burning.

Foreign waves
wash the lineaments
 of the beloved;
cheeks color of love
 recalled
in tranquillity,
by tropical waves
 washed away.

Autochtones
wear the white teeth
 of exiles.

In the mist I hear
the voices of children
far from their land
 (*telothi patres*)
singing a rapid song.

Soliloquy of the Prince

Now I am alive.
In ease and openness I take my now.

I know my wile.
Though I preside here like a hill,
I am not solid.

Am an uncobbled play of atoms
romancing at their lasts and firsts.
Pell-mell through existential time
I summer as steadily in the otherwhere
as a voyage of ducks.

To ascend, to condescend,
descend to be myself,
I'll winter in the everywhere.
My moved unmover,
I will not move.
My obligations—
brain, heart and the bodymaster—
I'll stake outside.
Moving like waiting wings they stir this stillness,
urgent to bear it nowhere and everywhere.
They have but elsewhere.

Now I am free to be old and innocent,
I advise you to be on your guard.

John Berry

His Death Rumored

In a forest of fluted trees
the margraves daughter
strokes the antennae of

an antelope,
the while feeding him lupines.

A land journey, a path to
the Water's edge
and sleep marine, the waking
upon depths conceiveless!
The mollusk mind gapes open
to Cosmos.
Swarm in, astrologies!

"Come Clubfoot out of your
detayning night.
Wakeful one, what say you
of my plight?"

"You will remember when you hear . . .
I saw the golden head of Solavar
and it shone in a forest of the sea
and the blue eyes of the god
were turned in white sleep
O fair form turn again . . ."

Daughters of the king under panoplies
float down the rivers to new lands
mentioned in the treaties, and their names
therein also coupled with young monarchs.

But the chagrin in the heart of the swallow
glitters in rays over the promontories
like the lines of a million pure triangles.

The light continues with one tone,
which is that of love.

John Berry

THE RELUCTANT PHOENIX

Reluctant phoenix, timid bird,
peeked between the flames and longed to pull
a Garbo act: no meddlers here; tapped
talon angrily as he recalled
how when a mere young grub he had been
fool enough to fall beneath the glass
of visiting archaeologist
who couldn't keep his mouth shut. "Kra, kra,"
he sadly clucked, "look what that led to."

The people bought tickets for the miracle
and three brass bands rehearsed the national
anthem
while the souvenir venders set up their stands.

Reluctant phoenix, decent bird,
longed to duck beneath the twigs, slip back
into the spice-bough egg, and pillow
his head in ashes. He squawked complaints:
bad enough to do this conjuring trick
in private; in public it's bad taste—
flapping widdershins like a ruddy
flaming nincompoop—it's not good form.
Why must Leap Year always come so soon?

As people stood waiting for the miracle,
the President arrived dressed in asbestos,
climbed a sand dune, and began to make a
speech.

Reluctant phoenix, dutiful bird,
decided to get it over with
as soon as possible, preened feathers
(shaking off the soot for benefit
of photographers), checked air pressure,
estimated altitude, and flapped

his wings in a trial run (they ached
and were out of joint from long disuse),
then ascended singing to the trees.

The people who had come for the miracle
licked ice cream cones and listened to the
speeches
and were so intent upon the President
that few noticed the curious jumping rooster
except a conscientious cop who warned, "Hey!
Pipe down. Can't you see there's a miracle
going on?"

Jack Anderson

AN OFFENDING CROW

Here in this rag-picker's springtime of alleys,
Sodden beneath the ashes and snow,
Far from the temperate green valleys,
Rots an offending crow.

High in the summer he flapped and cawed
Over the city, ragged and wild,
Proud his black eye as he glanced abroad,
Raucous and undefiled.

What lofty endeavor found him God?
What sweet death in that high field
Dropped him among us, profoundly flawed,
His alien feathers furled?

Now as I shuffle along the alleys
I scuff him up in the thawing snow,
In his dead eye the sight of green valleys
Gone, the offending crow.

Samuel Moon

REBIRTH

My brother and a friend
coming to the bend
in the road

that dropped
our house from view, stopped,
saying,

"You stay here,"
but I followed without fear
at a safe interval

a hundred yards behind
spring tape in mind
to wind up

out of town, where they had been told
not to leave a five-year-old
alone.

The landscape cleared—
houses disappeared
behind a hill

where water tower and steeple
stood for town and people
no longer seen

(and as they passed the crest
I had quietly drawn abreast
of them.)

The outlook opened wide—
scattered farms in the countryside
blended in.

Around the shrinking lake
summer sun had baked
mosaics in the mud,

drew back its liquid cover,
the lake-bed to discover
with its secrets

*cracks in the earth's crust
separating last from first
in design of time*

*drying life solution
sending evolution
on its landlocked way.*

Drawn to the emergent shore
we came as to explore
our point of origin,

following winding trails,
found circling snails
coiled at the end:

reversing leaves

that unrolling fling
overhead a tent in spring
and a brown and amber mussel
with elliptical
concentric rings

turned on end
grow infinitely thin:
lines blur:

surprised! too quickly closed,
tender flesh left exposed
in the narrow slit.

We came to a hole, dark and deep,
obscure as sleep
and half-remembered dreams.

The sun, aslant, could not reach
the slimy depths to teach
what lay at bottom.

Noon would have let us see
when shadows shorten to infinity
but curiosity cries *now*.

The other two, like scholars trained
in medieval logic, strained
to know by deduction.

"It must be a frog," my brother said.
"If it is, it's dead,"
his friend replied.

"Maybe it's a trick."
"Let's poke it with a stick."
But I,

a born empiricist
thrust in my fist

and felt around

where I could not see.

"It feels like iron to me,"

I said,

running my finger round a snapping turtle's jaw
raised in anticipation: then natural law
was invoked.

The world came sharply in to focus

O dividing day that woke us

I saw myself there

joined to a fellow creature,

in nature

and aware.

Eyes wide with wonder,

I looked about for thunder

to shatter my illusion:

the sky was clear,

reflecting back my fear

in its glassy oval.

My comrades stood perplexed,

then tore me out of context:

I was born again.

My finger sprinkling blood,

I blessed the earth I trod

running home.

Past or future, or between,

I'm at the center of that scene.

Robert Meredith

LIESEL IN HER GARDEN

It was an hour between seasons
When the equiponderant sun fell flush
With the red brick wall, casting no shadow,
And blue-gold bumbleflies were bourdons
To silence: from the shove of her spade
The tough earth broke in a shift of crumbs
And at her knees was an aisle of beans
Flowering. "Oh," she said, "Oh
How can I tell?" No, she said nothing:
It was an hour between seasons
And words, there was only sprawled earth,
A canticle of beans, and the opening silence,
And the breath of her lungs that flew in silence,
Spiring like Sandro's native angels
To fade into a burnished sky.

Harry Mathews

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